

Foreword

A special day for Raymond

The 80th birthday of Raymond Stora offered us the opportunity to celebrate the great physicist, the authentic humanist and a most honourable friend. This event took place in Annecy-le-Vieux on 8 July 2011, a few months after the official date. About one hundred colleagues and friends were present on this special day.

As could be expected, it was particularly easy to bring together all these ‘fans of Raymond’, as some of them defined themselves, and our only regret was not to have been able to welcome more people, for obvious practical reasons.

The following pages collect the scientific contributions presented on this occasion by some of Raymond’s distinguished colleagues. It is of course not our purpose to detail in this foreword the achievements of Raymond as a theoretical physicist all the way along his active career, but there are a few points we would like to emphasize.

Raymond Stora has played a key role in the development of gauge theories, which are the pillars of our modern and most successful formulation of the fundamental interactions. The discovery of the BRS symmetry has had not only an impact on the renormalization of the standard model of particle physics but also repercussions on many other fields of theoretical physics. Raymond’s genius is to be found also in his approach to a variety of subjects, ranging from their very formal and mathematical aspects to more down-to-earth phenomenology. Raymond has been awarded numerous honours in France and several international scientific prizes. He is truly a living encyclopaedia we have been most fortunate to have around us, a scholar who has always provided help and advice to colleagues and students. So many theorists, of all ages, have been and still are amazed by his swiftness in grasping the problems submitted to him, by his *infrared* judgment in detecting an error, a misinterpretation or a bad formulation, as well as by his eagerness and skill in solving those problems.

These scientific and human qualities were also helpful and much appreciated in the many positions of responsibility Raymond occupied at various national and international levels. Some scientists deserve the term of humanists, and that is definitely the case of Raymond. Indeed, Raymond’s interests are not limited to physics and mathematics: he reads Latin, he loves the arts, books – particularly those of the sixteenth century, as they were first published – but his main concern certainly lies in the human beings and the realization of their potential.

It was no easy task convincing Raymond to hold this meeting, as he has often shunned laurels and the limelight. Fortunately, the prospect of seeing old friends and reviving part of the history of the construction of gauge theories in front of younger generations, and then having a garden party did finally appeal to him.

We are grateful to all the participants for having made this day a great and memorable moment, to the speakers for the beautiful talks they delivered and the articles they kindly accepted to write, and of course to our charming collaborators Dominique, Virginie, Michelle, Nanie, Susy, with a special mention to Nathalie who took care so efficiently and so elegantly of the organization.

Raymond, you are an example to us, and we are proud to rank among your friends. We wish you many happy birthdays for years to come!

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